

## Message Text

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ACTION SSM-05

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 OC-06 CCO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00  
PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01  
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R 061649Z DEC 77  
FM USMISSION SINAI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3421  
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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DEPT FOR SSM

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: SOPN  
SUBJECT: L.A. TIMES AND WASHINGTON POST CORRESPONDENTS VISIT SFM

1. SUMMARY: CORRESPONDENTS DON SCHANCHE (LOS ANGELES TIMES)  
AND THOMAS LIPPMAN (WASHINGTON POST) MADE FIVE HOUR VISIT  
TO SFM BASE AND U.S. WATCH STATIONS ON DECEMBER 5. THEIRS  
REPRESENTED THE FIRST GOE SANCTIONED AND SUPPORTED VISIT BY  
CAIRO-BASED CORRESPONDENTS. CHIEF OF LIAISON AGENCY WITH

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, GENERAL EL KATEB PERSONALLY  
ASSISTED IN PREPARATIONS FOR THEIR VISIT. THE TWO VISITORS  
WERE BRIEFED BY THE DIRECTOR AND E-SYSTEMS TECHNICAL STAFF  
AND HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO INTERVIEW A BROAD CROSS SECTION  
OF SFM PERSONNEL. THEY WERE INTERESTED MOSTLY IN HUMAN  
INTERACTION OF SFM PERSONNEL AND THEIR REACTIONS AND VIEWS  
REGARDING THE SFM MANDATE, IN AFTERMATH OF SADAT'S VISIT TO  
ISRAEL. NOTICEABLY PLEASED BY THEIR VISIT, THE CORRESPONDENTS  
APPEARED TO LEAVE WITH IMPRESSION THAT SFM PERSONNEL WERE HIGH  
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ON MORALE, ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE NEW MIDDLE EAST SCENARIO  
BUT MAINTAINED A "BUSINESS AS USUAL" APPROACH TOWARDS CARRYING  
OUT SFM MANDATE. END SUMMARY.

2. CORRESPONDENTS WERE GIVEN A GENERAL BRIEFING ON SFM EVO-  
LUTION AND CURRENT OPERATIONS BY SFM DIRECTOR. DURING BRIEF-  
ING CORRESPONDENTS' MOST SIGNIFICANT QUESTIONS CONCERNED SFM

BUDGET; STAFFING PATTERN; THE NUMBER AND BREAKDOWN BY NATIONALITY OF VIOLATIONS OF SINAI II AGREEMENT RECORDED BY SFM, AND MANNER IN WHICH VIOLATIONS ARE REPORTED TO THE VARIOUS PARTIES. SCHANCHE AND LIPPMAN WERE GIVEN A COPY OF SFM BRIEFING STATISTICS, CONTAINING CURRENT BREAKDOWN OF VIOLATIONS (ISRAEL 30, EGYPT 1 AND UNIDENTIFIED 18). THE DIRECTOR CAUTIONED VISITORS AGAINST OVEREMPHASIZING NUMBER OF ISRAELI VIOLATIONS, COMPARED TO EGYPT'S ONE VIOLATION. HE POINTED OUT THAT CLOSE PROXIMITY OF THE EWZ AND U.S. WATCH STATIONS TO THE ISRAELI LIMITED FORCES ZONE AND IDF SOUTHERN COMMAND HEAD-QUARTERS AT RAFIDIM COULD ACCOUNT FOR THE APPARENT IMBALANCE REFLECTED IN STATISTICS.

3. THE CORRESPONDENTS WERE THEN BRIEFED BY E-SYSTEMS STAFF ON SENSOR OPERATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS. ESCORTED BY A USG LO, THEY MADE TOUR BASE CAMP, HAVING AN OPPORTUNITY MEET AND INTERVIEW A GOOD CROSS SECTION OF PERSONNEL. IN SPEAKING WITH PERSONNEL, THEY WERE INTERESTED IN MOTIVATIONS FOR JOINING SFM, GENERAL LIVING ATMOSPHERE ON THE CAMP, PARTICULARLY HOW THE FEMALE PERSONNEL VIEWED THEIR STATUS AND COPE WITH INHERENT PRESSURES OF WORKING AND LIVING UNDER HARSH CONDITIONS IN ISOLATION, AMONG AND OVERWHELMING MALE POPULATION. THEY CANVASSED SFM PERSONNEL REGARDING THEIR REACTIONS TO CHANGING EVENTS IN MIDDLE EAST, AS A RESULT OF SADAT'S VISIT TO ISRAEL AND WHETHER THESE EVENTS EFFECTED THEIR INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE AT SFM.

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4. FOLLOWING LUNCH THE CORRESPONDENTS WERE ESCORTED TO THE THREE

WATCHSTATIONS, WHERE AGAIN THEY HAD OPPORTUNITIES TO INTERVIEW SFM PERSONNEL.

5. COMMENT: BOTH CORRESPONDENTS WERE PLEASED TO HAVE FINALLY RECEIVED GOE APPROVAL TO VISIT SFM. THEY FELT GOE'S NEW COOPERATION WAS ENGENDERED BY THE EUPHORIA AT GOE HIGH LEVELS, AS PREPARATIONS FOR THE CAIRO CONFERENCE ADVANCE. THOUGHT ALSO THAT OTHER CAIRO-BASED CORRESPONDENTS WOULD BE PRESSING TO VISIT SFM. THEY WERE IMPRESSED WITH SFM FACILITIES BUT BECAUSE THEY WERE ALREADY FAMILIAR WITH ITS EARLY WARNING ROLE THEY CONCENTRATED ON HUMAN INTEREST ASPECTS OF THE MISSION. THEY WERE EQUALLY IMPRESSED BY HIGH MORALE OF PERSONNEL, WORKING AND LIVING IN RATHER "BLEAK ISOLATION." THEY APPEARED SOMEWHAT DISAPPOINTED THAT THERE WAS "NO ACTIVITY" DURING THEIR VISIT TO THE WATCH STATIONS AND BY THE FACT THAT THEY COULD NOT OBSERVE ANY TROOP MOVEMENTS IN EITHER LIMITED FORCES ZONE. AS A RESULT OF THEIR INTERVIEWS WITH SFM PERSONNEL, WHO SPOKE FRANKLY AND FREELY, THE TWO CORRESPONDENTS APPEARED TO HAVE LEFT WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT, WHILE THE SFM POPULATVN WAS

ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE NEW MIDDLE EAST SCERNARIO, THEIR  
ENTHUSIASM WAS TEMPERED BY AN ATTITUDE OF "BUSINESS AS USUAL"  
IN PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES AND CARRYING OUT THE  
SFM MANDATE.  
HUNT

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
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